Unit .26

Session .02

Jesus Is Questioned

Scripture

Mark 12:19-37

19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that **if a man's brother dies**, leaving a wife behind but **no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 20** There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring. **21** The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. **22** None of the seven left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too. **23** In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?" **24** Jesus spoke to them, "Isn't this the reason why you're mistaken: you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God? **25** For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. **26** And as for the dead being raised—haven't you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: **I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob**? **27** He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken." **28** One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?" **29** Jesus answered, "The most important is **Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. 31** The second is, **Love your neighbor as yourself.** There is no other command greater than these." **32** Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. **33** And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices." **34** When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to question him any longer. **35** While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? **36** David himself says by the Holy Spirit: **The Lord declared to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.' 37** David himself calls him 'Lord'; how then can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus models what it means to live under the authority of God's Word.

Option 1

"Pwning" (pronouncing "powning," rhymes with "owning") is a gamer term for totally dominating a game, especially in multiplayer. Pwning especially occurs when a player not only defends against another player's attack, but when that player turns the attack back against the original attacker.

Your students should come up with depictions of "pwning" to educate non-gamers. They can make drawings depicting pwning or they can make skits depicting pwning. They do not need to set their definition in a gaming context; they could also depict pwning in sports, or in a game show, or in school.

Let them share their depictions. Tell them that in today's lesson, we'll see Jesus "own" His opponents' arguments. The way He'll do so is with the Scripture; He's such a master of the Word of God and what it means that He can use His enemies' attacks against Him to show what the Scripture really means.

Option 2

Give each of your students an index card. Each person is to write down the most profound statement they can think of. Collect the cards and shuffle them.

Pull them out one at a time and have students rank the cards from most to least profound. You can spread them out in a line on the floor or on tables.

Once you have the statements all lined up, introduce one final card. On it should be written, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Ask them where on the spectrum of cards they would put this one.

As simple as the children's song is, it's an amazing statement: Jesus, the God of the universe, loves us individually. And the way we know this is because the Bible says so. The song lyric emphasizes the wisdom of the Bible as our foundational authority.

Tell the students that in today's lesson Jesus will make several profound statements. Each of those statements will come from the Word of God; Jesus says they are true because the Bible tells us so. Let's see what they are.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Mark 12:19-27.

Humans have always found questions about life after death fascinating. Every religion has some perspective on what happens after we die, even if that is ceasing from self or no existence at all. In Jesus' day, this was a fiercely debated topic amongst the Jews. But not every question is asked from a genuine desire to know and understand the truth.

- **Have you ever seen someone ask a deceitful or unfair question? What did that look like?**

The Sadducees, a Jewish sect, did not believe in an afterlife and rejected the concept of resurrection (Mark 12:18), but Jesus taught these very things. They considered Jesus a threat to their position in Judaism and local Roman politics, so they attempted to trap Him with a theological riddle, a disingenuous question about marital status in the "supposed" resurrection. They wanted to discredit Him in the eyes of the crowds.

The Sadducees' hyperbolic question was intended to paint the notion of an afterlife as silly. The Sadducees were hoping to trap Jesus by forcing Him either to deny a supernatural resurrection altogether or to admit that a supernatural resurrection would lead to some awkward realities in the afterlife (like a cluster of husbands for a single widow). To the Sadducees, there was no way around this dilemma.

Jesus answered that the woman wouldn't be married to any of the seven brothers in the afterlife because there is no marriage in the afterlife. Jesus taught that resurrection doesn't mean a continuation of what we see here and now but a whole re-creation—all things made new.

To establish the truth of the resurrection, Jesus appealed in verse 26 to the Law, the first five books of the Bible, which was still a part of the Sadducees' stripped down version of the Hebrew Scriptures. In Exodus 3:6, God Himself spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the present tense, even though these men had been dead for centuries. The implication from Scripture is that they still exist and are alive, in some fashion, though not yet physically resurrected.

- **Why is it always a good thing to begin our answer to something by starting first with Scripture?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 48, DDG)

Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God's special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus models what it means to live under the authority of God's Word.

Mark 12

18. "The Sadducees were a Jewish sect skeptical about the extent of the supernatural in the natural world. They were an elite group of Jewish aristocrats who were known as much for their wealth and privilege as they were for their devotion to the Jewish faith, although their version of the faith was stripped down. They taught that only the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (the Law) were divinely inspired by God and the rest (the Prophets and the Writings) were not. Contrary to the Pharisees, the Sadducees didn't believe in a heavenly kingdom that a Messiah would rule over; they didn't believe in a Savior who would save them from death's grip and restore all things. Instead, they believed when you die, you're just dead and cease to exist—no heaven, no afterlife, just nothing."[1]

19-27. "Earlier, Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees regarding marriage (Mrk. 10:2-12). In that case, the Pharisees chose a text from Deuteronomy to argue for no-fault divorce. Jesus went back to Genesis to provide a more accurate interpretive context for Moses' statement. Now the Sadducees challenge Jesus on the basis of the permanence of marriage, using a text from Deuteronomy to make the resurrection look silly. Jesus once again goes back earlier in the Pentateuch to answer His critics. This time He turns to Exodus to show how the resurrection is clearly established in Scripture."[2]

Activity

Give students index cards. Alone or in pairs, they should write a common objection against Christianity (e.g., how could someone rise from the dead) or a difficult question about Christianity (e.g., do animals have souls?) on each card. Collect the cards.

Randomize them, and then pass them back out to students. Remind students that in today's lesson, Jesus met difficult questions with the Word of God. In the same way, we should resort to Scripture as the best resource for dealing with difficult questions. Students should take whatever questions or objections they just received and try to find some Scripture to respond to them. Students may wish to work in groups to help each other find answers. Give them some time to see what Scripture they find. If they have a question to which the Scriptures don't speak, give them freedom to acknowledge they don't have an answer because the Bible doesn't provide one.

Let them share their answers. Wherever the conversation goes, make sure the main point you want to get across is that just like Jesus went to the Scripture to answer difficult questions, we should resort to Scripture, too, rather than logic, our own experience, what others have told us, what we might think.

In Defense (p. 50, DDG)

Jesus' words in verse 25 do not teach that deceased loved ones become guardian angels, as people often say to comfort those who are grieving. Rather, Jesus referenced the angels to emphasize that marriage won't apply in the afterlife, just as it doesn't for the angels now.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Mark 12:28-34.

The topic of the most important command in the law was another hot debate amongst the Jews, particularly the scribes. It was a popular belief that if one obeyed the law perfectly, one could earn God's love. So the scribes tried to identify the most important commands so that a reasonable attempt could be made to obey them all.

- **What are some Old Testament commands you would identify as most important?**

Jesus responded first by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which begins not with a command but with a proclamation about who God is—He is the one true God—followed by the command to love God with all that we are: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus went on to add a second command from Leviticus 19:18: we are to love others as ourselves. Jesus upended the entire Pharisaical system with this answer: we don't obey to earn God's love, but we love God and others because He first loved us.

- **Why was this a perfect response on the part of Jesus? How are the two commandments connected?**

Read Mark 12:35-37.

Jesus had been answering questions up to this point, and those who had hoped to trap Him had given up. Now Jesus asked a question of His own. The scribes knew the Messiah would be a descendant of David, a "son of David" (2 Sam. 7:12-16). But did they know what that entailed? Was the Messiah a conquering king who would liberate them from the Romans and take His seat on the throne of David as ruler over the promised land? Jesus pointed out that David himself had something to say about that.

To challenge the crowd's assumptions about the Messiah, Jesus referred to Psalm 110, which was written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This psalm as a whole speaks about the destruction of the enemies of God and His people, but Jesus focused on the first line, specifically the wording of that introduction. David's intentional and inspired words reveal the Messiah's divinity. For while Jesus is the human "Son of David," David also declared Him as "Lord."

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, a crowd of people lined up on the side of the road to welcome Him like a king. They cried out "Son of David," hoping He was the promised Messiah. Little did they know this Son of David was also the Son of God. The Scriptures as a whole make it clear that the Messiah would not only be a human descendant from David but also a divine figure from God Himself, superior to David and superior to the angels (Heb. 1).

- **What does it look like for you to declare Jesus as Lord in your everyday life?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus models what it means to live under the authority of God's Word.

Mark 12

28. Scribes were an elite class of Pharisee, experts in the religious laws of the Old Testament. They were a vocational hybrid of sorts: half theological expert and half lawyer. There were many religious laws that governed the Jews at the time (rabbinic tradition identified 613 laws in the Mosaic Law), and the scribe's job was to study each law and determine its purpose: why it existed and how it should be observed and judged.

Though scribes are viewed negatively throughout the Book of Mark (1:22; 2:16; 3:22; 8:31; 11:18; 12:38-40; 14:1; 15:31), this scribe appears respectful and genuine in his question to Jesus, seeking His informed input.

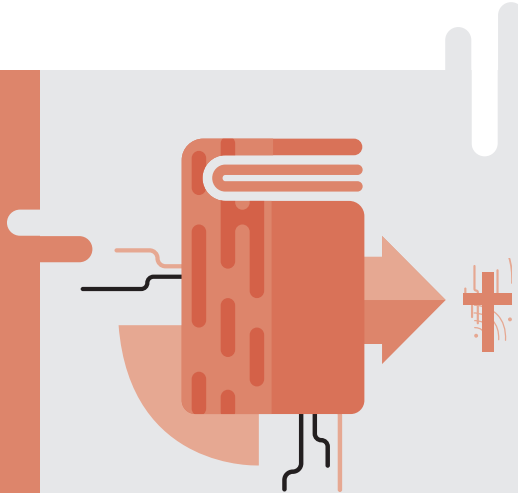
35-37. The question-and-answer exchange Jesus had been having took place during the week leading up to the Passover festival, which amplified people's hope for redemption. The longing for fulfillment of God's promise to David was swirling in the air. The Jews believed the Messiah would come with royal Davidic authority to Jerusalem and the temple to bring the glory of the kingdom God's people had been anticipating for ages.

The people in Jerusalem were hopeful for the Messiah's arrival. Questions about Jesus' own messiahship were growing among the crowds because of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and subsequent cleansing of the temple (Mark 11). Jesus knew this and used this opportunity to help them open their minds to something significant about the Messiah's identity—a truth that had been recorded in their Scriptures that even their best scribes had overlooked.

(p. 49, DDG)

Christ Connection

The religious leaders questioned Jesus to trap Him in His words, but each time, Jesus answered them from the authority of God's Word, and they could not respond. Jesus is the Word of God who came to reveal God perfectly to us. He has all authority in heaven and on earth.



JESUS IS QUESTIONED

Jesus models what it means to live under the authority of God's Word.

JESUS CONNECTION

The religious leaders questioned Jesus to trap Him in His words, but each time, Jesus answered them from the authority of God's Word, and they could not dispute what He said. Jesus is the Word of God who came to reveal God perfectly to us. He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

DISCERNMENT – Being able to recognize what is true and false or right and wrong.

HEAD

What two reasons does Jesus give for why the Sadducees don't understand God's Word?

How does the scribe respond when Jesus answers his question?

HEART

When the Jewish leaders asked Jesus questions, He began His answers by stating what the Bible said. Why is it important to know what God's Word says when you're trying to understand what is true and false?

The religious leaders were blinded to Jesus' true identity as the Son of God because they chose to stubbornly believe what they had always been taught rather than follow God. How can the things we learn from family, school or social media get in the way of discerning what is right and and wrong?

HANDS

Discernment starts when we understand that things aren't always as they seem. The religious leaders asked questions, but they wanted to trap Jesus, not learn from Him. And in your life, how a situation feels isn't always the real story. Before you act, react or *over*react this week, practice this two-step process—ASK, then ACT—to learn discernment.

1. **ASK** Good Questions
    - What actually happened? (Don't rely on someone else's version of events. Get the full story.)
    - What is the context? (Is "what he said" being taken out of context to make it sound bad? Or good?)
    - What does the Bible say about what's going on or about this topic?
    - What is the outcome I want? What outcome do I want to avoid?
2. **ACT** Carefully
    - Don't respond when your emotions are high. Take time to think or get advice about what to do.
    - Pause before you post. Remember that anything you post online will be online forever.
    - Go to those involved directly, if possible. Talking to other people about what happened never solves the real problem.
    - Pray and ask God to help you be discerning and make wise choices.